



For Immediate Release

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The Texas Conference of American Association of University Professors is deeply disappointed that the Texas Legislature passed SB17 to eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs at public universities and community colleges.

The bill sends a clear message to the 1.3M public university and community college students that our state is not committed to welcoming students from all backgrounds and to building a public higher education system that is truly inclusive and supportive of all.

Importantly, this version does not include any provisions for an infrastructure that will satisfy the workforce development requirements of federal and private grant funding agencies. Because of the critical role grants play in supporting thousands of personnel, and in training the next generation of workers with advanced skills, we believe that SB17 will prove devastating to the economy, and to building the highly trained workforce of Texas. The State should prepare for a loss of billions of dollars in research and programmatic grants.

SB17 also undermines the tenet of academic freedom essential to a thriving and innovative institution of higher education. Academic freedom is freedom from censorship by the government or institution. The bill regulates all interactions at a public university or community college, and calls for termination of employees who violate the ban on DEI programs and policies, the latter which are vaguely defined. Given the penalties, faculty and staff will self-censor in their interactions with students to avoid any perception that they might be violating some aspect of the bill.

This outcome was not what we desired, but we are grateful to the Senators, Representatives, faculty, students, staff, and others who spoke against the bill and attested to its dire consequences.

Even as the bill was under consideration, its impact on our public universities and community colleges has been manifest. We have already seen staff and faculty leaving the state in response to the proposed anti-DEI legislation and anticipate this trend to be magnified in the years ahead now that it has passed. This is a giant step backwards for our diverse state of Texas.